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## No Plans For Military Draft, Official Says

By Josh White, Washington Post Staff Writer

There are no plans to reinstate a military draft and the Bush administration does not support conscription, the Pentagon's top official for personnel and readiness told Congress yesterday.

Trying to counter recent Internet rumors that the military and the Selective Service System are girding for a potential draft to support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Undersecretary of Defense David S.C. Chu said there is no reason to bring back the draft. He fielded questions at a House Armed Services Committee hearing that focused on the strains on military personnel as officials plan to rotate more troops into the conflicts in coming months.

"The administration does not support resumption of the draft," Chu said, responding to a question from Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Pa.). "There is no secret plan on this front."

Members of the committee bemoaned the rising stress on the Army and the increasing use of the National Guard and Reserves. Chu and top military officials said that there is definitely a strain, but that the Army can handle its current operations while relying on reserve forces to share "the burden of service" throughout the all-volunteer military.

There are 18 brigades with more than 140,000 troops in Iraq, and officials said yesterday that the next rotation will keep about 135,000 troops there in 17 brigades. The U.S. military is expected to have a presence in Iraq for several years, but Pentagon officials yesterday declined to speak to the committee publicly about future rotations, saying only that they will be "different."

Last week, the Army announced it is dipping into a pool of soldiers who have left active duty, calling up 5,600 this week who are in the Individual Ready Reserve. While the IRR has more than 111,000 members, the Army's Human Resources Command has identified more than 22,000 it could call into service if needed. Pentagon officials have said they probably will tap into some of that pool.

A recent "stop-loss" order kept thousands of soldiers in the military despite their plans to leave active duty, and it followed a Pentagon decision to move thousands of troops from South Korea into western Iraq by early next year. The Army is also sending its elite training forces overseas.

As of the next rotation into Iraq, reserve components are slated to make up 43 percent of the forces there, said Air Force Lt. Gen. Norton A. Schwartz, director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Gen. Richard A. Cody, the Army's vice chief of staff, said forces are "absolutely" stretched thin. He also said the entire force is doing a job it was not necessarily trained for, arguing that the Army needs to reconfigure from a Cold War stance to a more versatile force for the global war on terrorism. "This is a different war," he said.

Some lawmakers said yesterday that they fear the military is dangerously close to being broken. Rep. Ike Skelton (Mo.), the committee's ranking Democrat, said he believes that the military is wearing its soldiers out. Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.) said he believes the military is "using people pretty hard right now" and needs to consider expanding, an idea the Pentagon has resisted because it would raise the military's budget.

"We are also concerned that insufficient force structure and manpower are leaving the services to make a decision that I liken to eating the seed corn," committee Chairman Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) said.